

June 9, 2008

President George W. Bush

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW

Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush:

As you know, rural communities across this country are suffering as the result of the economic downturn and changing federal policy regarding federal land management. Over the past several years, we have worked with your Administration to secure a ramped-down reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act, also known as Secure Rural Schools or county payments, which aids over 600 rural counties and 4,400 school districts in 42 states. We are writing to you today to confirm that according to high level officials in your Administration, you will not oppose or issue a veto threat on HR 2642, the war supplemental appropriations bill for FY 2008, because it includes a one year reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools program.

We understand that your position on the one year Secure Rural Schools reauthorization is contingent on that proposal not including full mandatory funding of the payments-in-lieu-of-taxes (PILT) program in the bill, and with the understanding that the \$400 million in the supplemental for Secure Rural Schools is the first year in any multi-year reauthorization that begins to ramp down spending on the program. The Administration's Statement of Administrative Policy on HR 3058, the Public Land Communities Transition Act, which is a four year reauthorization of Secure Rural Schools, contained a similar statement.

The expiration of the Secure Rural Schools program is truly an emergency for hundreds of rural counties across the country. These counties are again facing the prospects of closing libraries, laying off county employees, curtailing sheriffs patrols, releasing prisoners from jails, ceasing search and rescue operations, eliminating mental health care services, and some are considering declaring bankruptcy and giving up their county status. A short-term extension of the Secure Rural Schools program will ensure that rural school children continue to have access to a quality education, libraries remain open, and public safety is guaranteed.

We look forward to hearing from you soon regarding whether we can count on the Administration's support for the one-year Secure Rural Schools reauthorization in the war supplemental bill now before Congress.

Sincerely,

PETER A. DEFAZIO

Member of Congress